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U.S. Raises Bounty for Viet Cong

N.Y. Times Service

Saigon

The United States and South Vietnam have decided to pay the highest cash rewards of the war — up to the equivalent of \$11,000 — for information leading to the capture of certain key leaders of the Viet Cong's political underground.

Informed sources said yesterday that the U.S.-financed program will be tried first as a pilot project in four of South Vietnam's provinces and extended to others later, if successful. It is designed to stimulate interest among South Vietnamese civilians in the lagging program of de-

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stroying the Viet Cong's clandestine organization, which remains a serious threat to the success of the "pacification" effort.

There is continuing concern among American and South Vietnamese officials that the Communists' subversive apparatus, whose leaders remain elusive, would step up activities after the withdrawal of American troops, restore its hold over many rural areas, and again challenge the stability of the Saigon government.

CREAM

"It is the cream of the leadership that we are now after with those high rewards," said one official.

The decision to increase the rewards to such high levels reflects the difficulties of the so-called Phoenix program. The controversial effort, which critics say puts a heavy emphasis on assassination, often resulting in the deaths of innocent people, is often described as one of the most important but least successful programs in Vietnam.

Under the new system, authorities will offer from one million piastres